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Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The World Summit for Social Development was held from 6 to 12 March 1995 at Copenhagen, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/92. The Summit adopted the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action on Social Development, which represent a new consensus on the need to place social development as the highest priority on the political agenda of Governments, and to put people at the centre of development.

Since 1995, the General Assembly has considered the item "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development" at its fiftieth, fifty-first, fifty-second and fifty-third sessions. In its resolution 53/28, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-fourth session on the implementation of the outcome of the Summit.

The present report contains updated information on the implementation of the outcome of the Summit by intergovernmental bodies, and on preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the Summit and further initiatives, which will take place from 26 to 30 June 2000 at the United Nations Office at Geneva. It also contains references to reports and resolutions which have been issued and adopted on the subject since September 1998.

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I. Introduction

1. In March 1995, 186 Governments, of which 117 were at the level of heads of State or Government, gathered at Copenhagen for the holding of the World Summit for Social Development. They pledged to put social development as the highest priority on their political agenda, and adopted the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action, which contained principles, goals, commitments and recommended actions, and were endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/161.

2. Since the Summit, the General Assembly has considered annually an item on the implementation of the outcome of the Summit at plenary sessions, at which representatives of Governments have come together to report on national implementation and to share their views on the subject. This is the fifth annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Summit, and has been prepared pursuant to resolution 53/28. Previous reports submitted by the Secretary-General to the Assembly were contained in documents A/50/670, A/51/348, A/52/305 and A/53/211. The present report provides an overview of intergovernmental and other follow-up activities taken during the year 1999.

II. Special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and further initiatives

3. The Summit called upon the General Assembly to hold a special session in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of its outcome, and to consider further action and initiatives. That proposal was endorsed by the Assembly in its resolution 50/161.

4. By its resolution 53/28, the General Assembly welcomed the offer of the Government of Switzerland to convene the special session at the United Nations Office at Geneva, and decided that the session would be held at Geneva from 26 to 30 June 2000.

III. Preparatory process

5. With regard to preparatory process for the special session in its resolution 51/202, the Assembly decided that the Commission for Social Development, as the functional commission of the Economic and Social Council with the primary responsibility for follow-up to the Summit and for review of the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, would undertake work in 1999 and 2000 for the preparations of the special session.

6. Furthermore, in its resolution 52/25, the Assembly established a Preparatory Committee, open to the participation of all States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies, with the participation of observers in accordance with the established practice of the Assembly. The Assembly also decided that the Committee would hold its organizational session in May 1998 and initiate its substantive activities in 1999.

7. At its organizational session, held in New York from 19 to 22 May 1998, the Preparatory Committee adopted a number of decisions on the objectives of the special session; issues to be addressed at future sessions of the Preparatory Committee; coordination with the Commission for Social Development; role of the United Nations system; mobilization of voluntary resources; participation of non-governmental organizations; and arrangements for future sessions. It also decided to hold its first substantive session in New York from 17 to 28 May 1999 and its second substantive session from 3 to 14 April 2000, also in New York.

IV. Objectives of the special session

8. It will be recalled that the Preparatory Committee decided and the General Assembly reiterated that the objectives of the special session will be to reaffirm the Declaration and the Programme of Action agreed at the Summit and not to renegotiate them; to identify progress made and constraints therein, as well as lessons learned, in the implementation of the Declaration and the Programme of Action at the national, regional and international levels; and to recommend concrete actions and initiatives to further efforts towards full and effective implementation of the Declaration and the Programme of Action.

A. Preliminary assessment of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit

9. At the thirty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development and at the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee, the Secretary-General submitted

reports on the preliminary assessment of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit (E/CN.5/1999/4 and A/AC.253/7). These reports were prepared in response to the Preparatory Committee's request to the Secretary-General to submit a report focusing on the implementation of the 10 commitments, including the three core issues, at the national, regional and international levels.

10. Those reports, written four years after the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration, attempted to observe changes in policy trends, although that period was too short to register dramatic changes in specific indicators of social progress. The reports contained information on activities taken at the national, regional and international levels, and attempted to identify the main trends in policy-making that would indicate progress towards the fulfilment of the commitments adopted at Copenhagen. An attempt was also made to assess the implementation process according to the 10 commitments. The reports drew primarily on information available in the United Nations system, particularly in reports prepared by the regional commissions, the funds and programmes, the specialized agencies, including the Bretton Woods institutions, and other intergovernmental institutions, such as the regional development banks and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Information furnished by Governments since the Summit was also used.

11. The reports concluded with the observations that the implementation process of the goals reached at Copenhagen have been progressing at various degrees of speed and success. In several countries, there have been positive signs of change in policy orientation in relation to paying renewed attention to the problem of unemployment and poverty. However, much more needs to be done.

12. The review also highlighted the fact that several of the targets specified in the Programme of Action will not be met within the period agreed, and in some instances there have been severe setbacks. Also, progress observed in the fight against unemployment and poverty has been eroded by the severe economic difficulties experienced in several countries, which were brought about by the financial crisis and related development. There is also concern that the recent emphasis in financial and economic policies has not always been development-oriented, that the dominance of a limited set of macroeconomic targets and parameters over the social, political, cultural and environmental domains has gone too far, and that social and economic policies and objectives must be fully integrated.

B. Further initiatives for the implementation of the outcome of the Summit

13. The Secretary-General submitted two reports on the subject — to the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-seventh session in February 1999 (E/CN.5/1999/3), and to the Preparatory Committee at its first substantive session, in May 1999 (A/AC.253/8).

14. These reports, prepared to facilitate consideration by the Commission and the Committee on this topic, discussed issues of current international concern and proposed possible areas that could be addressed under each of the 10 commitments adopted at Copenhagen. In the view of the Secretary-General, there was a crucial need to identify priorities and mandate the elaboration of a few specific initiatives to be discussed and agreed upon before the special session. Sixteen issues were listed on which the special session might wish to focus.

V. First substantive session of the Preparatory Committee

15. The first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee for the special session took place from 17 to 28 May 1999 in New York. It conducted a preliminary review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit, and considered further actions and initiatives to implement the commitments made at the Summit. The 10 commitments contained in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development provided the framework for discussion.[1]

16. The Committee adopted a number of decisions which will be brought to the attention of the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, as described below.

Arrangements for the special session

17. The Committee recommended, *inter alia*, that the Assembly invite Member States to participate in its special session at the highest political level possible, and decide that the special session should have a Plenary and an Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole.

Title of the special session

18. The Preparatory Committee recommended to the Assembly that the special session be entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world".

Accreditation and modalities for participation of non-governmental organizations in the special session

19. The Committee deferred consideration of this subject to the inter-sessional open-ended consultations, to be held from 30 August to 3 September 1999.

Role of the United Nations system

20. The Committee invited all relevant organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and other concerned organizations to elaborate and submit review reports and proposals for further action and initiatives, and requested the Secretary-General to make available those reports and proposals to the Preparatory Committee at its second substantive session, in April 2000, and where appropriate, to the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-eighth session, in February 2000. These requests, totalling 25, were made under each of the 10 commitments adopted by the Summit, and will serve as the basis for discussion and decisions by the Preparatory Committee at its second session (see A/AC.253/L.7/Rev.1).

21. The funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as any other organizations which have been requested to provide reports, studies or documentation to the Preparatory Committee at its second substantive session, were requested to make that work available to the Secretary-General no later than 1 January 2000; each of the documents submitted should contain a concise summary of conclusions on the assessment of issues and proposals for further action.

22. Also, in response to the call by the Preparatory Committee to contribute to and be actively involved in the preparatory process and the special session by, *inter alia*, submitting proposals for further actions and initiatives, a number of funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system submitted reports to the Preparatory Committee at its first substantive session in this regard (see A/AC.253/9 and Add.1–10).

Further preparations for the special session

23. The Preparatory Committee also decided to adopt a set of procedures for preparation of the outcome of the special session, including an indicative calendar for the period leading up to the second substantive session in April 2000, to ensure the best possible preparation of that session (see A/AC.253/L.8).

24. It requested the Secretary-General to arrange for the convening of two inter-sessional, open-ended informal consultations of the Committee during the week of 30 August to 3 September 1999, and 22 to 25 February 2000 in order to consider further the Chairman's working draft texts.

25. The Committee also invited the Commission for Social Development, at its thirty-eighth session, in February 2000, to undertake the overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit, and to transmit the results of its deliberations to the Preparatory Committee at its second substantive session, in April 2000.

VI. Commission for Social Development, thirty-seventh session

26. The thirty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development was held in New York from 9 to 19 February 1999. It considered two priority themes under its restructured agenda and multi-year programme of work: "Social services for all" and "Initiation of the overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development". To assist the Commission in its work, the Secretariat convened two workshops of independent international experts on the themes "Ensuring access to social services of under-served populations" and "Innovations in the delivery and financing of social services". Reports on these workshops, as well as the report of the Secretary-General on social services for all, were submitted to the Commission (see E/CN.5/1999/6, E/CN.5/1999/7 and E/CN.5/1999/2).

27. Special presentations were made by the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund on the theme "Education for all". The Commission also held an expert panel discussion on the priority theme "Social services for all", followed by an exchange of views between the panellists and the Commission.

28. The Commission adopted resolution 37/1, entitled "Social services for all", and decided to adopt agreed conclusions on the topic and transmit them to the Preparatory Committee at its first substantive session, in May 1999, and to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999. The agreed conclusions contain analysis and recommendations for action to promote the efficient and effective delivery of social services for all as a contribution to overall social development. They set out general principles and goals, suggest priorities for delivery and

provision of social services, discuss the need for partnership between Governments and the other social actors, stress the importance of information, encourage the mobilization of resources and establish parameters for international cooperation for social services.

29. Concerning the second priority theme of "Initiation of overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development", the Commission had before it two reports of the Secretary-General, on further initiatives for the implementation of the outcome of the Summit (E/CN.5/1999/3) and on preliminary assessment of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit (E/CN.5/1999/4). The Commission held general discussions on these two aspects, and adopted resolution 37/3, in which it invited Governments to provide additional inputs, in particular proposals concerning possible further initiatives, to the Preparatory Committee to facilitate its work at its first substantive session. The Secretary-General was also requested to update the two reports on the preliminary assessment of and on further initiatives for the implementation of the outcome of the Summit, before their presentation to the Preparatory Committee at its first substantive session, in May 1999, reflecting the proposals and suggestions made during the discussions in the Commission, as well as any additional inputs submitted by Governments.

VII. Economic and Social Council, substantive session of 1999

30. The substantive session of 1999 of the Economic and Social Council was held at Geneva from 5 to 30 July 1999. The high-level segment was devoted to the theme "The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women". The ministerial communiqué adopted by ministers and heads of delegations participating in the high-level policy dialogue and the high-level segment,[2] reaffirmed the commitment made at the World Summit for Social Development to the goal of eradicating poverty in the world through decisive national actions and international cooperation, and the commitment made at the Fourth World Conference on Women to promote women's economic independence, including employment, and to eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women.

31. In the communiqué, Governments recognized that productive employment plays a central role in poverty eradication, and that the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all policies aimed at poverty eradication and employment creation, including through gender impact analysis, is all the more crucial since women constitute the majority of people living in poverty. Accordingly, they undertook to adopt effective poverty eradication strategies that address employment creation and gender-specific policies, which must be designed to address the conditions and needs of women and men on equal and equitable terms, and supported by an enabling international environment. Prerequisites for effective poverty eradication and employment creation strategies include the empowerment of people, in particular the empowerment of women, including promulgation and enforcement of anti-discrimination and non-discriminatory legislation and equal employment opportunity policies; democracy, the rule of law and the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development; as well as targeting key economic sectors for employment-intensive growth, including agriculture and non-traditional sectors.

32. The communiqué further recommended that public policies avoid reduction of expenditure on health, and stressed that the literacy of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in decision-making in society. Finally, the Council agreed that the international community has a key role to play in supporting efforts to eradicate poverty, promote productive employment and achieve gender equality, and that the mobilization of new and additional financial resources from all sources, national and international, is required. It also called upon the relevant organizations of the United Nations system to take consistent, coherent, coordinated and joint actions in support of national efforts to eradicate poverty, with particular attention to employment creation and work and the empowerment and advancement of women.

33. The Economic and Social Council also considered at its substantive session of 1999 the item "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits". In its resolution 1999/__,[3] the Council addressed ways to enhance the integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences; basic indicators for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels; and modalities of a review by the Council in 2000 of progress made in the promotion of an integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits.

34. On ways to enhance the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, the Council called upon

Governments, at the national and international levels, to renew their efforts to implement the commitments that they have undertaken and make more tangible progress towards the targets, goals and objectives set by these conferences. It decided to transmit to the General Assembly, as inputs to the five-year reviews of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development, the Council's outcome on the role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women; operational activities, in particular poverty eradication and capacity-building; and the coordination of implementation and coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on African development. It called for further cooperation between the functional commissions and the rest of the United Nations system in order to complement United Nations conferences and summits in a coherent way, and encouraged the functional commissions, in their outcomes, to identify more clearly actions that require a coordinated United Nations system-wide response.

35. Recognizing the importance of relevant, accurate and timely statistics and indicators for evaluating the implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations conferences and summits at all levels, the Council invited the Statistical Commission, in close cooperation with other relevant bodies of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations, to review the work undertaken in harmonizing and rationalizing basic indicators in the context of follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits.

36. Finally, the Council decided to assess, at the coordination segment of its substantive session of 2000, the progress made within the United Nations system, through the conference reviews, in the promotion of an integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields as a possible contribution to the Millennium Assembly.

VIII. National reporting

37. At its organizational session, in May 1998, the Preparatory Committee requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its second session, in 2000, a comprehensive document assessing the overall level of implementation of the outcome of the Summit, including the identification of constraints, obstacles and successes and lessons learned, as well as recommendations on further actions and initiatives at the national and international levels. To assist the Secretary-General in the preparation of the report, the Committee requested the Secretary-General to formulate general guidelines and a structure and common framework for national reporting on the progress made and obstacles encountered, and to invite Governments to provide information as soon as possible. Accordingly, these guidelines were prepared and forwarded to Governments in October 1998, with a deadline for responses of 30 June 1999.

38. As of the date of the present report, the Secretariat has received over 50 national reports, and work is now well under way in preparing the comprehensive report, to be submitted to the Commission for Social Development in February 2000 and to the Preparatory Committee in April 2000.

IX. Status of preparations for the special session

39. In a note submitted to the Preparatory Committee at its first substantive session (A/AC.253/6), the Secretariat provided an update on the preparatory process and the main activities undertaken between May 1998 and April 1999, including, *inter alia*, participation of non-governmental organizations, mobilization of voluntary resources, preparatory work carried out by the Secretariat, and arrangements for the special session.

40. The Secretariat also reported that it has been working closely with the Government of Switzerland, and holds regular consultations and discussions on arrangements for the special session and other relevant issues.

X. Non-governmental organizations

41. The interest shown by non-governmental organizations in the work of the Commission for Social Development and in the preparatory process of the special session has markedly increased since the holding of the Summit in 1995: in 1996, 49 NGOs attended the special session of the Commission; by 1999, the number of NGOs which attended the thirty-seventh session of the Commission, in February 1999, reached 113. At the first session of the Preparatory Committee, in May 1999, 131 NGOs sent representatives. Many NGOs have expressed great interest in participating at the special session and holding side events. It is anticipated that the number of NGOs attending the second session of the Preparatory Committee and the special session itself will progressively increase.

XI. Concluding observation

42. As preparation of the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and further initiatives is gathering momentum, the involvement of all actors involved in social development is essential. The challenge of the special session is to identify and agree on further initiatives to move forward the goals set at the Summit.

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 45* (A/54/45).

[2] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/54/3); see also E/1999/L.21.

[3] See also E/1999/L.57.